

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-14 have been allowed. Claim 15 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by European Publication 1253327. In response, Claim 15 has been amended to include the step of providing at least two different types of connection blocks incorporating different circuit elements therein, wherein the “attaching” step has been amended to recite that the attaching of a connection block is performed “such that a circuit element in the predetermined connection block is hydraulically connected to said option valve.” Basis for these changes will become evident from the following discussion.

According to a feature of the invention set forth in Claim 15, a hydraulic device includes a main valve block having control valves. For example, the control block 1 or 2 in the non-limiting embodiment of Figure 1 includes a plurality of control valves 10, 11, 12 or 16, 17, 18. Additionally, the main valve block includes an option valve for controlling the operation of an option actuator. For example, the option valves 23 in the control blocks 1 or 2 can be provided for controlling optional actuators other than the actuators 7-9 or 13-15 shown in Figure 1.

In accordance with the invention, at least two different types of connection blocks incorporating different elements therein are provided, and a predetermined connection block is attached to the main valve block in accordance with a function of the option valve such that a circuit element in the predetermined connection block is hydraulically connected to the option valve. For example, referring to the non-limiting embodiments of the Figures, a variety of connection blocks 34, 42, 44, 45, 49, 51 or 52 may be provided, each of which has different circuit elements. Then, in accordance with an intended function of the option valve, a predetermined one of the connection blocks is attached to the main valve block 1 or 2 in the

manner shown in Figures 2-7. It is thus possible to provide a variety of option attachments simply by attaching the appropriate connection block to the main valve block.

EP '327 discloses different embodiments of a hydraulic valve block in which a number of valve blocks 11-16 are stacked on upon the other. In each case, an end plate block 16 includes an on-off type valve 36 and variable orifice 37. Significantly, the end valve blocks in Figures 1 and 2 and their circuit components are identical. According to the Office Action, the valve block 14 in Figure 1 of EP '327 is considered to comprise an option valve, and the blocks 16 in Figures 1 and 2 are considered to comprise connection blocks.

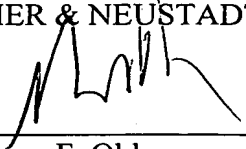
Initially, Applicants note that there is no teaching in EP '327 for the steps of providing at least two connection blocks and attaching a predetermined connection block to a main valve block in accordance with a function of the option valve. Assuming, *arguendo*, that block 14 in Figure 1 of EP '327 houses an option valve, it does not also house other control valves. Thus it is not a main valve block "with control valves" and an option valve. In any case, assuming that the end plate block 16 is a connection block, there is no suggestion in EP '327 that the end plate block 16 is attached to the block 14 in accordance with a function of the valve 36 and/or orifice 37. Certainly, this would not be suggested by the presence of Figure 2 in EP '327, since Figure 2 is an entirely different embodiment which lacks the valve block 14.

Finally, as discussed above, Claim 15 now recites that the connection blocks are of at least two different types incorporating different circuit elements therein. The end plate blocks 16 in Figures 1 and 2 of EP '327, on the other hand, are identical, and so the presence of identical end blocks 16 in the embodiments of Figures 1 and 2 certainly would not provide evidence of attaching a predetermined connection block, out of at least two different types of connection blocks incorporating different circuit elements therein, in accordance with a function of the option valve. Amended Claim 15 therefore clearly defines over this reference.

Applicants therefore believe that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early Notice of Allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

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